

[Mr. Titus Westbrook]

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Life History

FOLKLORE-WHITE PIONEER,

Miss Effie Cowan, P.W.

Mc Lennan County, Texas,

District 8.

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REFERENCE;

"Interview with Mr Titus Westbrook, Waco, Texas.

"I was born on Cow Bayou just south of the village of Lorena , in McLennan county , on the 6th day of August 1867. My father, Charles Westbrook, and his brother Mose Westbrook were natives of Mississippi and emigrated to Texas in the year 1865, at the close of the war between the States. My father and uncle located in McLennan County near the present town of Lorena, buying a tract of land consisting of 3500 acres. My parents reared a family of eleven children the eldest sister , was named Lorena, (for whom the town of Lorena was named) married S.C. Robertson of San Antonio. Moses died in his home near Lorena in 1902 leaving a family who continued to make this town their home. Joel and myself were associated in farming and stockraising. Jennie is the wife of James

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Harrison of Baumont. Eva, resides at Lorena; Charles engaged in farming on the old homestead. Coke resides near Waco; Louis, farmed near Lorena; Lucile married Arthur Bassett of the City of Mexico; Hallie, married David Anderson and lived in Shanghai China.

"I received my early education in the public schools of Lorena and attended the private school of Professor Strother of Lorena. On the 28th day of December, 1899. I married Miss Mabel Battle of Marlin, who is a daughter of the late Thomas E. Battle, who passed away on the 11th day of May, 1939, at his home in Marlin, Texas. Mr Battle celebrated his 91st birthday at this home on the 28th day of January, 1939. I feel that a brief sketch of his life would be appropriate here.

"Mr Battle was born in Forsyth Georgia on January 28, 1848. He was a son C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 of William Nichols and Mary Ann Cabiness Battle. His father chose Texas as his home in the early fifties, and was formerly judge of Falls county. Judge Battle was a lieutenant in the Confederate army during the Civil War and Mr Thomas Battle (my father-in-law) volunteered as a private at he the age of fifteen years in the 30th Texas cavalry, which [?] was under his fathers command. Mr Battle was educated at Waco University (later Baylor) in 1860-, also attended andolph Randolph Macon College of Georgia and in 1867-68 was a student at Washington and Lee University in Richmond Vorginia. " Mr Battle had a great part in the upbuilding of this part of the country He was not only known for his banking connections but for others, including extensive farming and cattle interest. He was married to iss usan Miss Susan Lucy Green in 1873. Their children are Mrs W.O. Bunch of Marlin, my wife Mabel; Mrs C.A. Orltorf of Marlin and Mrs S.B Hunt of New York City. and Mrs T. Berry Brazelton, of Waco, Texas.

"It was because of the historical connection as well as his early attendance of Baylor University that the president Hon. Pat M. Neff gave him a special invitation as guest of honor at the founders day program, when the statue of Judge R.E.E. Baylor was unveiled, on the 1st day of Febuary 1939. He being the oldest alumni present. Mr Battle and Judge Baylor were warm personal friends. It was in the early fifties that Judge Baylor became

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Judge of the Waco district court and having no suitable place to hold court he was offered the facilities of the Battle home, where one of the first district court of McLennan county was held. It was when the father, N.W. Battle , became judge following Judge Baylor by a few years that the first court [?] of Falls county was held by Judge Battle. 3 “Mr Battle has been active in community and patriotic movements. In his youth he was express messenger for the Texas Express Company when the service was new and the first railroad passed the Falls county. Later he was general manager of a mercantile business and began his farm and cattle activities. He was a former commissioner of the county, also a former county treasurer of the Marlin school board and former member of the board of regents of A & M. College, of Bryan Texas . At the time of his death he was president of the First State Bank of Marlin, Texas , and until the first of May , 1939 , he had not been absent from the bank a day in years.

“When I was fifteen years of age I became interested in raising Shetland ponies. From small orders in this country the business grew until I filled and shipped orders to all points of the compass. Among the prominent concerns which I supplied was the Ellis Loto Sells Floto Show at Denver Colorado. After I grew to manhood I became general manager of the 2,335 acre estate of the firm of Sanger Brothers , south of Waco, near the towns of Satin , and Golinda. In an endeavor to make the 1500 acre of farming interest of this property bring better financial returns I changed the labor from convict to free labor. Then I planted more cotton and as cotton at that time was a paying crop I began to see the deficit turned into profit. I continued as manager of this farm and ranch until 1910 when my brother Joel and myself became the owners of the estate.

“A description of the above estate taken from an article which was published in a History of Central and Western Texas, By B.B. Paddock, Vol. 11 Lewis Publishing Company, “ reads as follows, “Down in the valley of the Brazos it lies, the model farm of over 2300 acres, owned by Sanger Brothers 4 now Westbrook Brothers, a farm so gigantic in its scheme and so perfectly conducted as to be a marvel to those whose lives have been spent in tilling the soil / and all that comes after it, which is a great deal. Call it a farm a plantation,

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a hog ranch, if you will, for it is all these and more, a tremendous body of tremendously productive land, of which every square foot contributes its mite to a prosperous and valuable whole.

This farm lies in a bend of the Brazos in Falls county, a short drive from Laguna(now Satin) a station on the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad, from which point trainload after trainload of farm products finished stock , and cordwood is shipped annually. The great farm is leveed on the north against possible harm from Bull Hide creek, on the west by Cow Bayou and the cultivated lands are protected by heavy wide built turnrows. The surplus water within the fields is carried off by what is known as "the red ditch", which starts at the north side of the plantation and runs completely through to empty into Hog Creek. The entire river frontage of the farm is protected by concrete wire dams and by three foot levee on the water front, which is strengthened with Bermuda sod and by growth of carefully planted willows.

Eighteen hundred acres of this past domain are under cultivation, the remainder being reserved for pasturage, the whole being sodded in Bermuda grass. Nothing but a visit to this farm could show exactly what it is. Figures are available for comparison, but do not loom up as does the reality they represent. From eight hundred to one thousand hogs are sold annually from the farm. At the present time there are eighteen prcheron Percheron brood mares owned by Mr Westbrook. 5 The horses on the place are looked after by "Horseman McQuaid, a man who has forgotten more about horses than the average man knows. There is not a bad looking horse on the place. All are in fine shape, clear eyed and bright and able to do thier part of the work. A number of young mules are grazing in the pastures, sleek, well fed fellows with alert ears and clean limbs.

The plantation maintains its own blacksmith shop and a couple of smiths are constantly at work keeping the stock shod and repairing some of the plows, harrows, horse rakes or other implements of which the place has an amazing array. In fact there is noth nothing in the shape of farming machinery that is not kept on the farm, from a steam thresher and

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a manure spreader down to a diminutive "scatcher" used to keep the cotton fields clean and clear. The farm is splendidly equipped with building improvements. There is the two-story managers house overlooking the river and having an office in the front yard. There are long rows of cottages for workmen.

There are sound barns and sheds, there being barn room for one thousand tons of hay, now filled. There are twenty four horse stalls, great machine sheds, hog shelters, seed bins and other buildings, not forgetting one great barn, two stories in height, used as a feed barn. A system of fire protection is maintained in the shape of hose nozzles at convenient points and patented fire extinguishers hung in the buildings. That this farm is enormously productive is shown by the fact that between 20.000 and 25.000 bushels of grain will be sold this year, that part of the farms product left from feeding. There will also be sold this year something like 1.500 cords of wood secured in thinning out one of the pastures. " 6 "Other early land owners in this community were Colonel curley Gurley ; J.T. Davis , Waco ; Goodrich and Clarkson of Marlin; the Wittners, Guderians, Wooleys, Duty's Gaines (Col. D.Y.), of Chilton; E.L. Hatch of Lorena and the Salmon family. These families for many years formed the principal settlement on the Waco-Marlin road, west of the Brazos river.

"An early post-office was at Guda where the earliest schools were located. It was one mile northwest of the present town of Satin, near the place owned by Mr Guderian. The name Guda is dived derived from the abbreviation of the name Guderian. The first post-office and station on the an San Antonio and Aransas Pass railroad was at Gurley (named for the Gurley family) about to two miles northeast of Satin. Gid Moncas was postmaster and John Buckner owned the store.

"A little nearer the cedar brake and saw-mill owned by R.R. Temple where the cedar was used / in the manufacture of cedar lumber and pencils, I saw an advantageous location for a store and laid off a town and called it " edar oint Cedar Point ." Vic Walker came over from Lorena and went into the mercantile business with me. The store was

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ncorporated incorporated and changed hands , until today it is practically owned by the Walker Brothers. Will Walker came to this community and operated a gin first. Both own farms in this vicinity in addition to thr their retail business.

“After the store was established at edar oint Cedar Point and other activities spran sprang up, a postoffice was sought. J.P. Hamilton, who had previously been manager of the Sanger farms was appointed post-master and in 1892 he served the new town as postmaster. He set about finding a name for the town and Lagun Laguna , was first suggested and so called for awhile. 7 “I had hired a number of Mexicans to clear the land. “Lagana” is the Spanish for lake, and Jackson's lake was near by, so the Mexicans referred to the place as Laguna. When the railroad came there was found to be another town in Texas by the name of Laguna and so fianlly the name of Satin was submitted and accepted by the postal authorities and the little railroad town south of Waco, west of the Brazos river was born.

“In 1890 the railroad (San Antonio and Aransas Pass) was built through the community. Engineers cut a winding swath through the dense woods. Trains came, railroad stations, postoffices and the means of transportation of the produce of the country. Down came the huge stately old trees-elms, ash, sycamore, cedars. willow, cottonwood, oak, elder and all the others that grow along the rich river banks.

“Saw-mills sprang up and prospectors came in for timber for various purposes. Several years after the railroad came, W.G. Liggett and E.A. Liggett of Chilton came in representing a pencil factory. R. R. Temple was the foreman for the company. They established and superintended the cutting and sawing of cedars. To all parts of the country went pencils made of Satin cedar. Members of the Temple family still / live in Falls county.

“Cordwood was over abundant and cheap, for a time it was so cheap it did ot not pay the cost of cutting , until the land was cleared up. In less than three decades the dense woods have dissapeared. The town grew out of a huge wildcat thicket, according to many who

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live today, from a vast flat area in and around Satin and extending to the river, which was a thicket of dense woods. 8 "Satin community was closely related with neighboring communities in those early days. This relationship continues and the people of Chilton Golinda, and Satin are woven in [?] one historical background. All that section of Falls county, west of the razos Brazos river, northward to the Lennan McLennan County line, embraces the communities therein, and was a [virtual?] wilderness in those days, including the heavily wooded section of which I have mentioned. Some of the earlier families finally moved to the other settlements as a protection from malaria, which the wooded section was troubled with. whereas [?] I became interested in this community through my interest in managing the Sanger Brothers plantation or farms.

"The winding little Cow Bayou has furnished water to these settlements as it flows on its way to the east and into the river. Altho' troublesome Indians had passed on their way to the west by the late thirties, those early settlers still kept a vigilant eye open for them, as, later on they would slip away from their reservations and swoop down on the communities and steal the settlers stock. " Among those who helped in the development of this section was Col D.Y. Gaines of Chilton, J.T. Davis of Waco and Colonel Gurley of Gurley, (and later Waco.) Before the turn of the century Col. Gurley had passed on and his son John continued the management where his father left off, of their farming and stock business. Finally J.T. Davis of Waco acquired an interest in the Gurley ranch and after Mr Davis, too, passed on, his son, J. Lee Davis, not only continued farming interest but helped to start production of oil on his land. 9 "Under the direction of J. Lee Davis a number of shallow wells were drilled and the foundation for oil development was laid, where once the dense woods and thickets stood. Many changes have taken place in the past fifty years as they have all over the world. Nowhere down the long corridor of time have these changes been more pronounced than in this section of the county known as West all Falls county. So, like magic, arose these little towns of Satin, Lorena, Golinda, Chilton and Lott on the west of the razos Brazos, in Falls county, especially in the valley, the land is rivalled only by the Nile in Egypt in its rich production.

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"For many years I have been a citizen of Waco, but those early days of development of the new farming land has been a leading influence in my life. At the present I am interested in the Life Insurance business, and am giving of my time to the building up of the Franklin Life Insurance Company. But the old days when life was young and we were in the land developing stage were the best.